DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 051 847 LI 002 907

TITLE	Regional Seminar on Statistics of Culture and Mass Communication for Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean; Guadalajara, Mexico, 21 September-2 October 1970. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).
REPORT NO	COM-CONF-21-7
PUB DATE	21 Dec 70
NOTE	10p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Books, Foreign Countries, *Library Materials, Library Standards, *Library Surveys, *Mass Media, National Programs, Periodicals, Reports, Seminars, *Statistical Data
IDENTIFIERS	Latin America, *Library Statistics, UNESCO

ABSTRACT

The three parts into which this paper is divided are: (1) Library statistics, (2) Statistics on book production and (3) Statistics on mass media. The following main topics are discussed: (1) Organization, methodology and use of national statistics on culture and mass communication: (a) libraries, (b) book production, (c) newspapers and other periodicals, (d) films and cinemas and (e) radio and television; (2) Improvement of statistical methods and techniques in these spheres, with an eye principally to national planning in the first place and secondly to the international comparability of statistics and (3) Organization and functioning of national services responsible for statistics of culture and communication in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. A list of seminar participants is appended. (The working paper which provided the basis for these discussions is available as LI 002 766) (Author/NH)

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ED051847

COM/CONF.21/7
PARIS, 21 December 1970
Translated from the Spanish

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON STATISTICS OF CULTURE AND MASS COMMUNICATION FOR MEMBER STATES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Guadalajara, Mexico

(21 September-2 October 1970)

FINAL REPORT

1. The Regional Seminar on Statistics of Culture and Mass Communication for Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in the Casa de la Cultura in Guadalajara, Mexico, from 21 September to 2 October 1970. This Seminar, provided for under the United Nations Development Programme (Technical Assistance), was organized by Unesco with the collaboration of the Mexican Government, to give those responsible for statistics on culture and communication an opportunity to compare the results of their experiences and exchange views on questions of common interest in this sphere, with a view to improving and developing statistics on:

(i) Libraries

(ii) Book production

(iii) Newspapers and other periodicals

(iv) Films and cinemas

(v) Radio and television.

This Seminar is the second of a series of Regional Seminars organized by Unesco on statistics of culture and mass communication; the first was run for the Arab States in 1968.

2. Seventeen delegates from Latin America and the Caribbean attended the Seminar on Unesco's invitation: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. Also present was the representative of the Asociación Interamericana de Radiodifusión appointed to this Seminar who sat in at some of the meetings. A Unesco expert attended as adviser and two officials were sent from the Unesco Secretariat. The full list of participants is given in an annex to this report.

3. On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Francisco Medina Ascensio, Governor of the State of Jalisco, Mr. Marcos Arias Gama, Under Secretary for Home

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Affairs, welcomed the participants and formally declared the Seminar open. Others who figured in the inaugural ceremony were the Rector of Guadalajara University, Mr. Ignacio Maciel Salcedo; the Mayor of Guadalajara, Mr. Efraín Urzúa Macías; Mr. Benjamín Trillo representing the Secretary of Public Education in Mexico and Mr. César A. Lazos Alvarez acting as Co-ordinator of the Seminar for the Government of Jalisco.

Mr. Milan Babic, Chief of the Division of Statistics on Culture and Communication, on behalf of the Director-General of Unesco thanked the Government of Mexico for their hospitality, saluted the participants and defined the aims of the Seminar.

4. The Seminar then elected its officers, all unanimously, namely: Chairman: Professor Pablo Xelhuantzi (Mexico); Vice-Chairmen: Dr. Manuel de Jesús Goico Castro (Dominican Republic); and Professor Alejandro Velez Viteri (Ecuador); Rapporteur: Professor Nidia Fantina Romero de Burns (Panama).

5. The working paper entitled "Guidelines for the Establishment of Statistics on Libraries, Book Production and Mass Media" (COM/CONF.21/1), previously circulated to participants, provided the basis for the discussions. This document is in three parts: (1)"Library Statistics"(by Paul Poindron, Inspecteur Général des bibliothèques, Adjoint au Directeur des Bibliothèques et de la Lecture publique, Paris); (2) "Statistics on book production" (by Zora Steinman, Adviser at the Statistical Institute of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Zagreb); (3) "Statistics on mass media" (from a paper by Dr. Mark Abrams, Research Director, London Press Exchange, London).

The following main topics were discussed:

A. Organization, methodology and use of national statistics on culture and mass communication:

   (i) Libraries

   (ii) Book production

   (iii) Newspapers and other periodicals

   (iv) Films and cinemas

   (v) Radio and television.

B. Improvement of statistical methods and techniques in these spheres, with an eye principally to national planning in the first place and secondly to the international comparability of statistics. Study of the problems affecting the implementation of the "Recommendation concerning the standardization of statistics relating to book production and periodicals" adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its thirteenth session in 1964, and of the "Draft Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Library Statistics" submitted for approval by the General Conference of Unesco at its sixteenth session in 1970.

C. Organization and functioning of national services responsible for statistics of culture and communication in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

6. By way of introduction to the discussion of these topics, Mr. Babic reported virtually on Unesco's programme and work in the matter of cultural policies, in order to give participants a general idea of the problems, the importance and the foreseeable future of culture statistics, which would have to fit the requirements of cultural policies in the near future.

The term "culture statistics", in its widest sense, should apply to any statistics connected with a cultural activity whatever the medium for propagating culture: libraries, books, newspapers and other periodicals, museums, art galleries, concert halls, radio, television, films, cinemas, records, cultural centres, "houses of culture", festivals, etc. After a detailed analysis of the reasons for the lack of culture statistics both at the international and national levels and the lag behind other social statistics, the conclusion was reached that nowhere in the world were there national statistics currently available which could furnish the data essential for working out and executing a cultural policy. National statistics were fragmentary, incomplete, insufficiently detailed; they did not constitute a coherent system embracing the totality of cultural activity and assembling the indicators common to all manifestations of culture. The immediate task of those responsible for statistics on culture was to improve and develop the specific statistics already existing in this sector; the succeeding objective would be to work out a system of statistics of the totality of cultural activity in all its aspects.

Library statistics

7. As a basis for the discussion of this subject, the meeting took the first part of the document COM/CONF.21/1 and the Draft Recommendation mentioned in paragraph 5 of this report. These documents present a programme and draft rules as regards the definitions, classifications and presentation of statistical data. They also contain other elements liable to be taken into account in national statistics programmes, with the object of enabling participants from countries where statistics are as yet non-existent or only nascent, to gain a better idea of their scope.

8. Since library statistics are at an embryonic stage in most countries in the region, the participants concluded that the programme recommended by Unesco could be adapted for a start, with other elements added according to the requirements and possibilities of the concerned countries. The application of the Unesco definitions, in the opinion of the participants did not appear to present any problem with the exception of that on the distinction between "Administrative unit" and "Service point" in certain cases, and that on data of library expenditures in respect of capital expenditures and acquisitions, observing that these disbursements are made by authorities other than the libraries themselves.

9. In the light of the problems dealt with in connexion with library statistics, it was concluded that in some countries the glaring features were the lack of a central entity to collect and process statistical data, as also of library units, books, and librarians in adequate quantities, generally arising from lack of means. Similarly, attention was drawn to the paucity in some

countries of technical personnel trained in library statistics. In such cases it was recommended that the help of the appropriate entities be sought with a view to a possible solution of the problem.

10. A recommendation was made for the preparation of the minimum statistics necessary for purposes of international comparability, to be compiled and published at regular intervals, which is not at present done in most countries of the region.

11. As regards the method of enumerating libraries' book stacks, some participants thought the traditional method of counting the number of actual volumes sounder than counting in metres of occupied shelves. In the case of mobile libraries or "library vans", treated by Unesco as "service points", some participants suggested that national statistics should also show the numbers of stops made to serve users as a supplementary means of determining the extent of use.

12. The participants were agreed that the Unesco statistical schema was much fuller than the national systems which in most cases stopped at the figures of library book stacks, numbers of visits and numbers of works consulted. Nevertheless some national statistics went further than the norms set by Unesco, in classifying the collections and the works consulted according to disciplines.

Statistics on book production

13. The second part of the working paper COM/CONF.21/1 "Statistics on Book Production" was submitted for discussion by the participants with the object of clearing up the criteria proposed by Unesco on the definitions, the classifications, the methods of enumeration, the collection and the presentation of the statistics, thereby furthering compliance with the "Recommendation concerning the international standardization of statistics relating to book production and periodicals", approved by the General Conference of Unesco at its thirteenth session in 1964. This part of the working paper also serves to draw attention to certain points which might present difficulties in interpretation and application at national level.

14. Participants were of the opinion that it was essential to deal with the question of legal deposit in countries where it did not yet exist and to recommend the introduction of such a measure and also considered that national bibliographies, which only existed in some countries, should be produced by all, these two elements being prerequisites for the assembly of statistics on book production.

15. It was desirable that each State designate a single organism in which statistical information on book production should be centralized observing that in some States of the region such depositaries were not clearly designated or did not exist.

16. Some countries in the region still lack adequate technical facilities for printing the works they produced and for this reason are obliged to rely on better-equipped countries in the region, as for instance, the production by ODECA-ROCAP[1] of school textbooks for the countries of Central America and for Panama. Under the terms of the Unesco Recommendation such publications should

(1) Organization of Central American States - Regional Office for Central American and Panamanian Affairs.

be included in the statistics of the country of manufacture, but this procedure is unsatisfactory for countries getting their publishing done abroad because it fails to show the real intellectual activity of the country of provenance. It was felt that in such cases, exceptionally, these publications could figure in the statistics of their "native" countries with an explanatory note on the position.

17. After examining other problems posed by compliance with the Recommendation, it was concluded that this presented no serious difficulties and assurances were given to the Unesco Secretariat that the necessary steps would be taken to secure the preparation of national statistics with the international norms.

Statistics on newspapers and other periodicals

18. A detailed study was made of that part of the working paper dealing with the methodology preparation of statistics on newspapers and periodicals, as well as those paragraphs of the "Recommendation concerning the international standardization of statistics relating to book production and periodicals" having special reference to certain definitions and classifications that should be followed in preparing the statistics aforesaid.

19. The position with regard to statistics on newspapers and periodicals in the countries represented was described by their respective delegates, who in many cases gave particulars of the difficulties presented by the compilation of full and detailed statistics. Some of the major difficulties consisted in the ignorance of these statistics' importance in those questions which were the primary sources of the information; the frequency with which countries lacked an organ to centralize and check these statistics, and lastly the absence in most of the countries of national bibliographies necessarily incorporating the newspaper and periodicals output.

20. Some participants judged that there was a need to start or pursue studies relating to the uses of press statistics in the various countries, arguing that here mere collections of figures were not enough; whereas it was extremely useful to know, country by country, the content and quality of the printed information media and their impact on the society at which the information was directed.

Statistics on cinemas and film production

21. Obviously the cinema constitutes one of the media of mass communication and represents an important social activity. None the less, despite its importance, statistics relating to film production and exhibition are insufficiently developed in most of the countries of the region.

22. For the satisfactory compilation of statistics on the cinema, a basic programme should be prepared in each country giving the data necessary for the purposes of the survey. There will be no major difficulty in following the guidelines suggested by Unesco. However, in addition to these basic elements, it is open to countries to elaborate their statistics at national level which can be fuller than those for international use.

23. As regards statistics on film production and exhibition, it was suggested that the sources of information used should be film producers, distributors and importers, cinema owners and operators, and publicity agencies, save in the

exceptional case of all these phases of the film business being centralized in an official institution.

24. As regards methodology and periodicity, in the opinion of participants, the statistical data in question should be collected at regular intervals through the medium of questionnaires suitably conceived and presented. Sampling procedures are to be recommended for measuring the effect of the information media on the public. The questionnaires should be distinguished by clarity and simplicity.

25. It was the participants' finding that the statistics in this sector were behindhand in relation to other statistics in the cultural sphere and it was resolved to take the norms proposed by Unesco in its questionnaire for a starting point amplifying them according to the requirements of each country.

26. As regards statistics on the production of full-length films, it was noted that since production of them is practically nil in most countries of the region, these figures are only collected and published by the few film-producing countries.

27. Statistics on the film sector in general should be produced by each country to the standard, at the least, of the minimum programme reflected in the annual questionnaires sent out by Unesco to Member States with a view to publication of the replies in the Unesco Statistical Yearbook.

Statistics on radio and television

28. Despite the growing importance of radio and television as media for the dissemination of culture and of the rôle falling to them in the efforts currently directed to the economic, social and cultural advancement of the masses, statistics on radio and television still remain rudimentary in many countries of the region.

29. As regards the methodology of data collection the participants were of the opinion that getting the figures for radio and television transmitters, and types of programmes, on the lines proposed in the Unesco questionnaire, presented no particular problems where there was an official entity responsible for the collection of such data, but this was not the case in certain countries.

30. Greater difficulties arise when it comes to statistics of the numbers of radio and television receiving sets, for the simple reason that most countries of the region do not operate a system of licences or permits for the use or possession of sets. In consequence some countries have used population and dwelling censuses and/or household surveys to determine whether houses have a radio or television set. However, these methods are not entirely satisfactory, in the first place because very often what is given is not the number of sets but only the number of households with sets; secondly because these reports are only prepared at very long intervals whereas statistics on the number of sets should be compiled annually; and lastly, because in some countries the people refuse to answer this question and thus the data obtained are not reliable.

The conclusion reached was that each country must try to solve this problem individually and that any statistical data submitted should be accompanied by observations on methods used for their assembly.

Organization and functioning of national services responsible for statistics of culture and communication

31. From the documents presented by participants on the organization and functioning of the national services responsible for the statistics of culture and communication, the snags which in one way or another have blocked or slowed the improvement of these statistics, emerge as problems of budgeting and material resources; lack of legal provisions or the subsistence of antiquated and ineffective legislation; lack of the necessary machinery to ensure compliance with the dispositions in force; crude data collection programmes and methods; lack of co-ordination between the services responsible for cultural activities which are or should be the sources for the statistics on culture and information; and lack of trained statistics personnel in sufficient numbers for the volume of work.

32. At the suggestion of the Unesco representative the participants took an initial look at the problem of the shortage of statisticians with training in the sector of statistics on culture and information and they concluded that the countries of the region should try to rectify this deficiency without delay. As in the other branches of statistics, training should be provided at two levels: a "secondary" level course for assistants and a university level course for the higher posts. A specialist in the statistics of culture and communication needs detailed knowledge of the structure and mechanisms both of the cultural institutions and of the mass media, to be able to plan the inquiries and to process and analyse the data.

33. Some countries have national centres for statistical training, organize courses and take full advantage of fellowships. There are also regional centres such as CIENES or CELADE, but speaking generally there are no facilities for training in the statistics of culture and information. To supply this training increased aid from Unesco in the form of technical assistance and fellowships would be desirable.

34. Following this, the representative of the Unesco Secretariat made a brief report on the activities of Unesco in the field of statistics and presented a communication on the scale and scope of the programme of technical assistance, viz. the grant of fellowships for specialized studies abroad, dispatch of experts to Member States and the organization of Regional Seminars.

35. Before closing the discussion the representative of Unesco gave a run-down of the methodological problems arising with regard to the assembly of statistics on the financing of culture and in the same connexion reviewed the original survey made by Unesco in 1969 whose purpose was the compilation for the first time of international statistics on public expenditures in respect of culture.

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